MPHEC
Maritime Provinces
Higher Education
Commission

CESPM
Commission de
l'enseignement supérieur
des Provinces maritimes

Multi-Year Business Plan
2006-2007 to 2008-2009

- Public Release -
March 2006

The Council of Maritime Premiers

Le Conseil des premiers ministres des Maritimes

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The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) was established in 1974. The MPHEC is an "agency of the Council of Maritime Premiers." In June 1997, the Ministers of Education in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island agreed, after extensive review, to renew and refocus the Commission's mandate through an Agreement Respecting the Renewal of Arrangements for Regional Cooperation Concerning Post-Secondary Education. This renewed mandate was ratified by the Council of Maritime Premiers. In January 2005, the new Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission Act was proclaimed, giving full force to the Commission's renewed mandate.

Under the 2005 legislation, the Commission's primary orientation has been re-directed toward "improving and maintaining the best possible service to students as life-long learners", primarily within the university sector. This is to be achieved through the following duties: quality assurance, data and information, cooperative action and regional programs, as well as other duties as the Ministers may assign. The Commission is also given the authority to provide specific services to one or more provinces or institutions, within its scope of activity and with regards to funding policy, as agreed to by the Ministers.

I INTRODUCTION

This is the Commission's third Multi-Year Business Plan. It is intended to provide stakeholders with an understanding of the Commission's role, focus and priorities during the next three fiscal years (2006-07, 2007-08, and 2008-09). The Business Plan starts by describing the Commission's External Environment (Section II), then moving on to its Operational Framework (internal environment) (Section III). Its primary foci are the organization's Strategic Framework (Section IV) and Implementation Plan (Section V).

The Commission's top strategic priority over the planning period will continue to be sustaining the production of value-adding information outputs across all mandated functions.

II EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

The Commission's external environment is characterized by two interrelated dimensions: (i) a variety of stakeholder groups expressing different and generally conflicting expectations, and (ii) the fact that the Commission's renewed mandate is not necessarily well understood by these stakeholders. The first characteristic is a permanent feature of the organization, while the second one will be more directly addressed over the planning period.

The renewed mandate modified the Commission's role away from a leadership position sustained primarily through functional relationships with its stakeholder groups (approving programs for funding purposes, collecting data for funding purposes and analysis, allocating funding, etc.), to that of providing assistance and advice to these stakeholder groups. The renewed mandate also shifted the focus away from the rational use of resources toward the quality of service to students as life-long learners.

The existence of diverse stakeholder groups, each with its own set of expectations of the Commission, is a permanent feature of the organization which greatly affects its operations.

The 2005 Act specifies that the "Commission may provide other services or functions to one or more institutions or provinces as set out in its business plan." It adds that "the Commission may be asked by provinces to provide advice or services to them for determining funding policy or for providing funding in support of post-secondary education." The Commission provides analysis and advice, as well as administrative services, to the Province of New Brunswick regarding university funding. It also provides administrative services to the Province of Prince Edward Island with respect to both university and college funding.

There are currently eighteen post-secondary institutions within the scope of the Commission, sixteen of which are publicly-funded universities with total enrolment, in 2004-2005 (preliminary data), of 72,967 (24,823 in New Brunswick, 44,151 in Nova Scotia and 3,993 in Prince Edward Island). Of these sixteen, two (Cape Breton University and Nova Scotia Agricultural College) also offer college-level programs in addition to degree programs. The remaining two institutions (Holland College, Maritime Forest Ranger School) offer solely non-degree programs. The institutions within the Commission's scope are therefore quite diverse.

The preceding paragraphs describe an environment that presents a significant challenge to the Commission. This challenge might best be summed up as the management of asymmetrical relationships:

- *With the institutions within the Commission's mandate*: The Commission does not review, nor approve college-level programs. The Commission collects, on behalf of Statistics Canada, college-level enrolment data but does not validate, analyse, or disseminate them. Therefore, most of the work performed by the Commission is performed with sixteen institutions (one in PEI, four in NB and eleven in NS). Within these sixteen institutions, significant variation exists in terms of institutional context and size which often requires different approaches in order to fully recognize these differences. Furthermore, each of these institutions also expects the Commission's publications, analysis and advice to consider and reflect its specificity.
- *With Provincial Departments of Education*: In the area of university funding, as described earlier, the Commission performs more duties for New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island than for Nova Scotia, which over the last few years has completely transferred over this function. However, in the areas of quality assurance (program review and approval, and the monitoring of institutional quality assurance policies and procedures) and data and information (collection and analysis of data) the balance is reversed. The eleven Nova Scotia institutions account for approximately 70% of the institutions within the Commission's scope for these functions.

The true challenge presented by asymmetrical relationships rests much more in the differing, and often conflicting, expectations of the various stakeholders than in the asymmetry itself. Addressing this challenge requires a sound articulation of the Commission's mandate for stakeholders to ensure they hold realistic expectations. While some measures are already in place to help the

Commission address this challenge, over the planning period, the Commission intends to take additional steps to ensure that its stakeholders clearly understand the scope of the Commission's mandate and are, as a consequence, better able to take advantage of the services the Commission offers.

III OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK (INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT)

As evidenced by the governance structure described in the following pages, the Commission's internal environment adds another layer of complexity to the external environment described above.

Governance Structure

The Commission's governance structure involves the following:

- The three Maritime provincial governments, represented through the Ministers of Education and the Council of Maritime/Atlantic Premiers (the shareholder);

- The Commission, as appointed by the Ministers of Education, includes a collective of 20 members and the Chief Executive Officer as an ex-officio non-voting member, the committees established by the Commission, the Chief Executive Officer as recruited by the Commission and appointed by the Ministers, and staff.

The Commission must be seen through two lenses to fully grasp its governance structure. The legislation uses the term Commission to describe both the larger organization and the organization's governing body or board. A visual representation of the Commission's current governance structure and operational framework, Figure 1, follows.

The Shareholder

Within the Commission's governance structure, the shareholder is represented by the three Maritime provincial governments, represented through the Ministers of Education and the Council of Maritime/Atlantic Premiers and the Council's secretariat.

The Ministers of Education, collectively (or individually as appropriate in some instances)

- Adopt enabling legislation and monitor the Commission's compliance with the legislation;
- Verify that an appropriate governance structure is in place;
- Maintain an on-going dialogue with the Commission with regard to government policies, priorities and performance expectations;
- Approve key changes in the direction of the organization;
- Monitor the performance and results of the organization;
- Validate that the Commission's accountability obligations are adequately discharged;
- Recruit and appoint/remove Commission members;
- Appoint the Chair (the Minister of Education in the relevant province only) among members from the specified province;

- Appoint/remove the Chief Executive Officer, on recommendation from the Commission;
- Approve the Commission's multi-year business plan (as per the 1997 Agreement which specifies that this task is shared with the Deputy Ministers); the legislation makes no mention of a business plan;
- Receive(s), under the Council of Maritime Premiers, the Commission's Annual Report and financial statements.

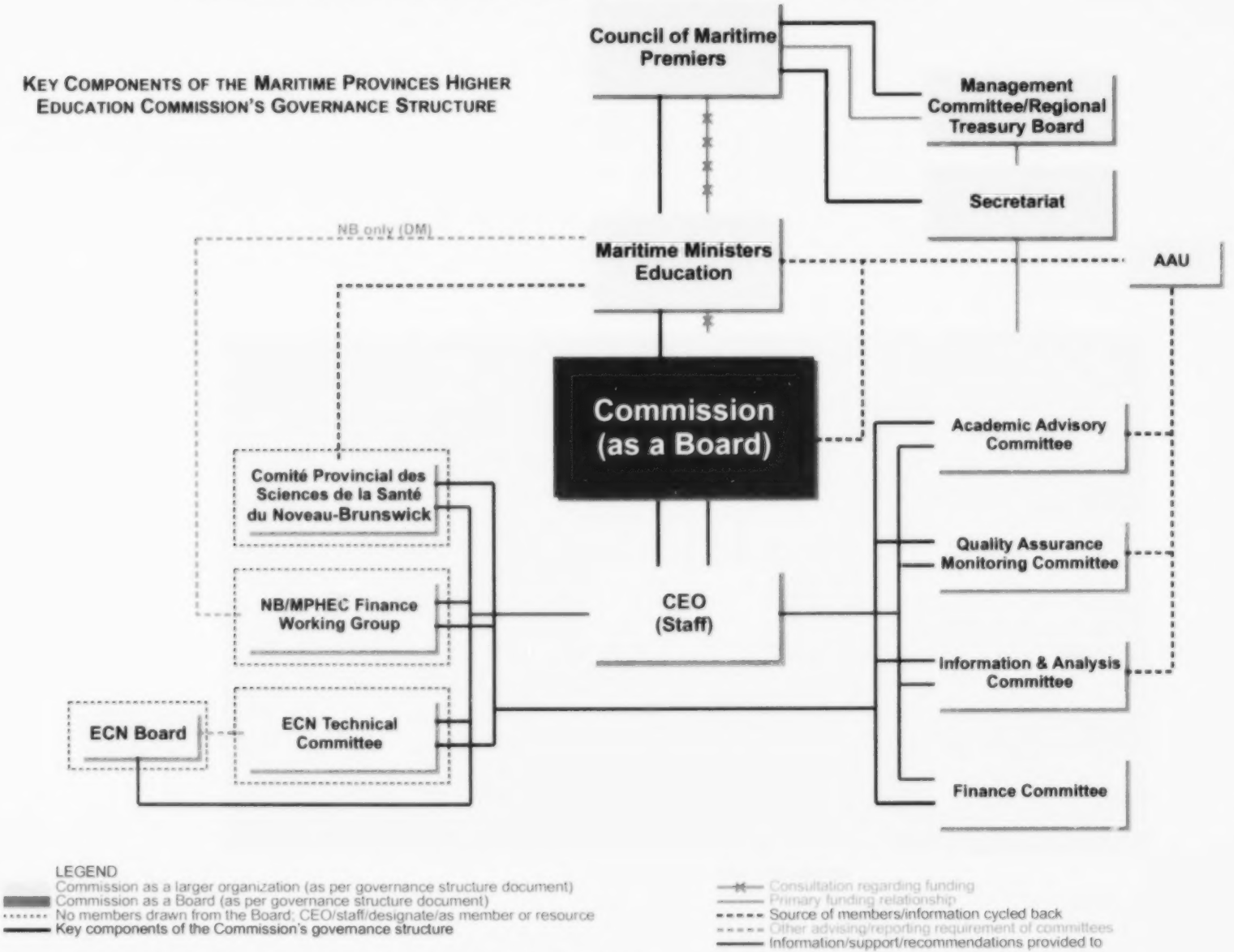
The Council of Maritime Premiers

- Established the organization (as per both the new and current legislation);
- Approves the Commission budget (through the Management Committee/Regional Treasury Board), as per past practice; the Agreement charges the Council with the consultation of Ministers in the approval process of the Commission's budget. The new legislation does not address the budget approval process, the issue is under discussion;
- Receive(s) along with the Ministers of Education under the Council of Maritime Premiers, the Commission's Annual Report and financial statements.

The Secretariat to the Council

- Negotiates compensation for the Chief Executive Officer (current practice; may have been delegated by the Commission or the Ministers);
- Determines general personnel policies, including guidelines for staff remuneration and benefits (salary scales; travel allowance);
- Appoints auditors; external auditors report to the Council of Maritime Premiers.

Figure 1
Commission's current governance structure and operational framework


KEY COMPONENTS OF THE MARITIME PROVINCES HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION'S GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE
Council of Maritime Premiers
Management Committee/Regional Treasury Board
Secretariat
NB only (DM)
Maritime Ministers Education
AAU
Commission (as a Board)
Academic Advisory Committee
Comité Provincial des Sciences de la Santé du Noveau-Brunswick
Quality Assurance Monitoring Committee
NB/MPHEC Finance Working Group
CEO (Staff)
Information & Analysis Committee
ECN Board
ECN Technical Committee
Finance Committee
LEGEND
Commission as a larger organization (as per governance structure document)
Commission as a Board (as per governance structure document)
No members drawn from the Board; CEO/staff/designate/as member or resource
Key components of the Commission's governance structure
Consultation regarding funding
Primary funding relationship
Source of members/information cycled back
Other advising/reporting requirement of committees
Information/support/recommendations provided to

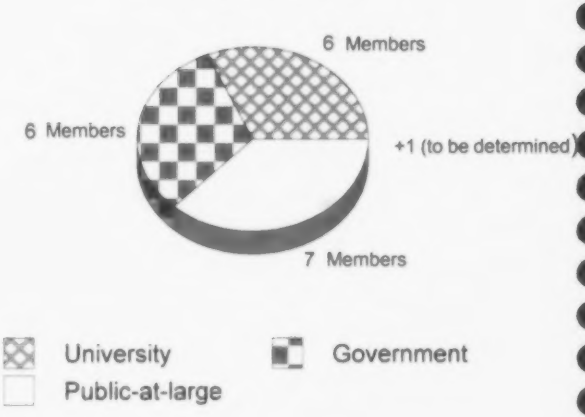
N.B. The term board is used to clarify the roles of the various components of the organization.

Membership

The 2005 Act defines both the membership of the Commission and the appointment process. Representation covers the three Maritime provinces and all major stakeholders from each of these provinces, including governments, post-secondary institutions and the public-at-large. Each of these members brings a unique perspective to the Commission. The 2005 Act specifies that at least two members are students; students are included in the public-at-large category in Figure 2. The 2005 Act has increased the Commission membership by one (to 20). The current distribution of members across the three groups will accordingly need to be reviewed shortly.

Figure 2

MPHEC Membership



The Commission's membership is one of its greatest assets, especially in dealing with stakeholder groups' expectations. The balance of membership supports a decision-making process that takes into account a regional and collective perspective. Care must nonetheless be taken so that the diversity of views and expectations does not unduly restrict the Commission's ability to act.

Advisory Committees

The legislation stipulates that the "Commission has the power to establish advisory committees." This includes standing committees, to deal, with some continuity, with a function or role of the Commission, as well as *ad hoc* committees or working groups, to address a specific issue or matter, normally with a finite time line. The main purpose of committees is to assist the Commission in achieving its objectives and fulfilling its mandated functions.

The Commission's operational framework relies heavily on the use of advisory committees. Its standing committees are:

- AAU-MPHEC Academic Advisory Committee;
- AAU-MPHEC Advisory Committee on Information and Analysis;
- AAU-MPHEC Quality Assurance Monitoring Committee;
- Finance Committee;
- New Brunswick/Prince Edward Island Educational Computer Network; and
- Comité provincial des sciences de la santé du Nouveau-Brunswick (CPSSNB; New Brunswick Provincial Committee on Health Sciences)

At the time of writing, the Commission only had one working group, the New Brunswick-MPHEC Finance Working Group.

The use of standing committees greatly enriches the Commission's ability to generate advice and analysis. The Commission's reliance on these committees allows it to process more information and to analyse it more comprehensively in a more timely fashion. Perhaps more importantly is that the Commission draws, through its Committees, on a wide network of resources and perspectives. All its committees but one (the Finance committee) rely in part or entirely on the institutions (Academic Advisory Committee, Information and Analysis Committee, Quality Assurance Monitoring Committee, and NB-PEI ECN) or the community (CPSSNB) directly involved in the area or activity for both members and issue identification.

This web of individuals participating directly or indirectly in the Commission's deliberations increases the quality and the credibility of Commission decisions. This network constitutes an asset for the Commission in working to ensure that stakeholders understand the Commission's mandate and the limits in its role. As is the case for the Commission, care must be taken to ensure that the reliance on committees does not lead to unreasonable delays in the process. A balance must also be found and maintained between too limited an involvement of the Commission in issues dealt with by committees and the temptation to redo work performed by committees.

Staff

At this time, the Commission has on staff expertise in the following areas: data collection/management, data analysis, academic program review, finance, project management and event organization. Staff is responsible for most of the Commission's day-to-day activities; under direction from the Commission (as a board) and the advisory committees, and provides support to the Commission and these committees. The flow of information from staff to committee and Commission members and back is one of the Commission's greatest assets. It allows committee and Commission members to benefit from the knowledge and expertise developed by staff, while staff benefit from a "sober second look" from a variety of perspectives in their sphere of authorities. Section V, Implementation Plan, provides more detail on the resources required to realize this Business Plan, and deals specifically with the challenges pertaining to retaining the Commission's data management team.

Annual Reporting and Evaluation Framework

The Commission's work plan covers the planning period, but is updated annually. It also constitutes the basis for annual evaluations and reporting. More specifically, through its annual budget submission the Commission reports, on its performance during the past year and deliverables for the next year. A new multi-year business plan will be submitted in August 2008.

IV STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Primary Orientation

The 2005 Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission Act (section 11.1 in New Brunswick's and Prince Edward Island's, section 12.1 in Nova Scotia's) describes the Commission's primary orientation as follows:

(1) The Commission shall, in carrying out its duties, give first consideration to improving and maintaining the best possible service to students as life-long learners by
   (a) asking measures intended to ensure that programs of study are of optimum length and best quality,
   (b) stressing prior learning assessment and recognition, and credit transfer, to implement the principle that duplication of effort is not required in order to gain credit for learning which has been successfully accomplished,
   (c) promoting smooth transitions between learning and work,
   (d) promoting equitable and adequate access to learning opportunities, including making those opportunities available at times and places convenient to the student, and
   (e) taking measures intended to ensure teaching quality.

Legislated Duties

The Commission has summarized its key duties or areas of intervention under the following categories:

(a) Quality Assurance;
(b) Data and Information;
(c) Cooperative Action;
(d) Regional Programs;
(e) Province-Specific Services[1].

The 2005 Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission Act (sections 11.(2) and 11.(3) in New Brunswick's and Prince Edward Island's, sections 12.(2) and 12.(3) in Nova Scotia's) defines the Commission's principal duties as follows:

Duty Summary	Legislation	
Quality Assurance	(2)(a)	to undertake measures intended to ensure continuous improvement in the quality of academic programs and of teaching at institutions, which without limiting the generality of the foregoing may include the review of institutional programs and practices for assuring such improvement and making recommendations to institutions and the Provinces,

[1]At present, the Commission does not provide institution-specific services, although the 2005 Act provides for this possibility.

Duty Summary	Legislation	
Data and Information	(2)(b)	to ensure that data and information is collected, maintained and made available for assuring the public accountability of institutions, and to assist institutions and the Provinces in their work, which without limiting the generality of the foregoing may include (i) establishing data and system standards, (ii) establishing public reporting requirements and producing public reports, and (iii) carrying out studies in regard to public policy, institutional concerns and issues related to post-secondary education, and providing advice to institutions and the Provinces on these matters,
Cooperative Action	*(2)(c)*	*to take initiatives to stimulate cooperative action among institutions and the Provinces where such action is likely to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the post-secondary education system in the Provinces, which without limiting the generality of the foregoing may include* *(i) encouraging initiatives for institutions to offer joint, complementary and regional programs, and* *(ii) encouraging administrative, financial and common service arrangements which reduce the overhead cost of programs and the overall cost to students and the Provinces,*
Regional Programs	*(2)(d)*	*to continue to develop and administer funding transfers among the Provinces for regional programs, which without limiting the generality of the foregoing may include developing and administering funding arrangements for programs outside the region, as required to provide additional educational opportunities for students from the region, and*
	(2)(e)	*to undertake such other duties as the Ministers may assign.*
Province-Specific Services	*(3)*	*The Commission may* *(a) provide such services and functions, as may be agreed upon by the Ministers, to one or more institutions or to one or more of the Provinces,* *(b) provide such advice and services, as may be agreed upon by the Ministers, to one or more of the Provinces to determine their post-secondary education funding policy, and* *(c) recommend to the Ministers the names of post-secondary educational institutions that may be added to or deleted from those prescribed by regulation for the purposes of the definitions "institutions" and "universities."*

Mission

The Commission also operates on the basis of the Mission Statement first published in the 1999 Business Plan. This Mission Statement reflects stakeholder consultations held in the Maritimes during the process leading up to the 1997 Agreement reorienting the Commission's role and functions and the production of the Commission's first-ever Multi-Year Business Plan. It also

reflects the values or "principles" agreed to by the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) in February 1999 in its *A Report on Public Expectations of Postsecondary Education in Canada*. Over the years, a few minor changes have been made to the Mission Statement to enhance its clarity.

The Commission has agreed that, because it does not have direct contact with learners, the best way it could achieve its primary orientation was by providing assistance to institutions and governments in enhancing the post-secondary learning environment, hence the following mission:

MPHEC MISSION

As an Agency of the Council of Maritime Premiers that provides advice to Ministers responsible for Post-Secondary Education in the Maritimes, the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission:

Assists institutions and governments in enhancing a post-secondary learning environment that reflects the following values:

- **Quality:** continuous improvement in the quality of programs, institutional practices, and teaching
- **Accessibility:** program, delivery, and support services that optimize Post-Secondary Education availability
- **Mobility:** portability of learning and credits throughout the Post-Secondary Education system in the Maritimes
- **Relevance:** effective and responsive interaction among learners, the work force, and the community
- **Accountability:** evidence of value, sustainability, and cost-effectiveness of public and learner investment
- **Scholarship and Research:** commitment to the pursuit of knowledge

Objectives

To flesh out further its duties, the Commission has agreed to pursue the following objectives:

Objectives	Duty supported
(1) Provide assurances that programs developed by institutions within the MPHEC's scope meet agreed-upon quality criteria and Confirm that institutions within the MPHEC's scope have appropriate policies and practices to ensure the on-going quality of their programs.	Quality Assurance/ Data and Information
(2) Collect, store and maintain quality, comprehensive and relevant information across all mandated functions and Devise data and information products providing stakeholders with value, across all mandated functions.	Data and Information (indirectly, most other duties)
(3) Increase awareness of, and dialogue on, Maritime post-secondary education issues and opportunities, both in the Maritimes and nationally.	Cooperative Action/ Data and Information

Objectives	Duty supported
(4) Promote and facilitate cooperation within the Maritimes and with other provinces and external partners (such as the Council of Ministers of Education and Statistics Canada), which includes facilitating and promoting cost-effectiveness of, and accessibility to, the broadest range possible of programs.	Cooperative Action/ Data and Information/ Regional Programs
(5) Provide advice and services to the Provinces, as requested.	Varies
(6) Ensure the effective and efficient management of Commission resources.	Corporate objective

Strategic Priority

Over the planning period, the Commission's mission, to assist institutions and governments in enhancing the post-secondary learning environment, will continue to be articulated primarily through a sustained production of value-adding information outputs across all mandated functions. This strategic priority continues to be the best way for the Commission to assist institutions and governments in improving and maintaining the best possible service to students as life-long learners. It crosses all mandated functions, and is most evident in two main spheres of activity: Quality Assurance and Data and Information.

Under Quality Assurance, the Commission provides leadership in terms of program development and assessment, as well as best practices in this area, as evidenced by the update to its Quality Assurance Policy (May 2005) and events such as the conference on student learning outcomes organized in November 2004. Under Data and Information, the Commission provides leadership in data collection standards, as evidenced by the fact that the national Enhanced Student Information System (ESIS) was first implemented and operational in the Maritimes. The system is now used extensively by the Commission to provide unique value-added outputs. The Commission also provides decision-makers with value-added information products through publications, which draw upon data from its Graduate Follow-up surveys, ESIS and other data specific to a topic such as that found in the Commission's upcoming publication on research and development funding. The value added by the Commission is found in information products that focus on issues from a Maritime perspective which most often is quite different than that found in other jurisdictions.

The production of value-adding outputs also provides further benefit to stakeholders primarily through better-informed decision-making. It is believed that this priority will help the Commission address its second key challenge in terms of its external environment, stakeholders understanding of, and familiarity with, the Commission's work. This priority is therefore the cornerstone of the Commission's Business Plan.

Corporate Priorities

At the time of drafting this Business Plan, the key corporate priority pursued by the Commission continues to be the integration of the Commission's data management capacity within its permanent base (see Section V, Implementation Plan, of the Business Plan). This component is essential to the complete implementation of the Commission's renewed mandate.

To achieve this objective requires that special project funding, provided annually since 1996-1997 to fund the Commission's data management capability, be transferred to the Commission's base budget. Data management reflects a core function of the organization, yet it is funded through annual requests for special project funding. Notably, the request to transfer this funding to the Commission's base budget actually reflects the status quo in terms of funding allocated to the Commission's human resources. The Commission is therefore looking to normalize a long-standing situation, which would not cost the provinces more than it has over the last several years. This is a very important issue for the Commission and it is imperative that it be addressed with a view to the longer term plans of, and for, the organization.

The second key corporate priority pursued by the Commission will revolve around the development of an enhanced external communication framework for the organization, which will likely include the tracking of outcome measures. At the time of writing, the Commission's plans in this regard are still in the very preliminary stages.

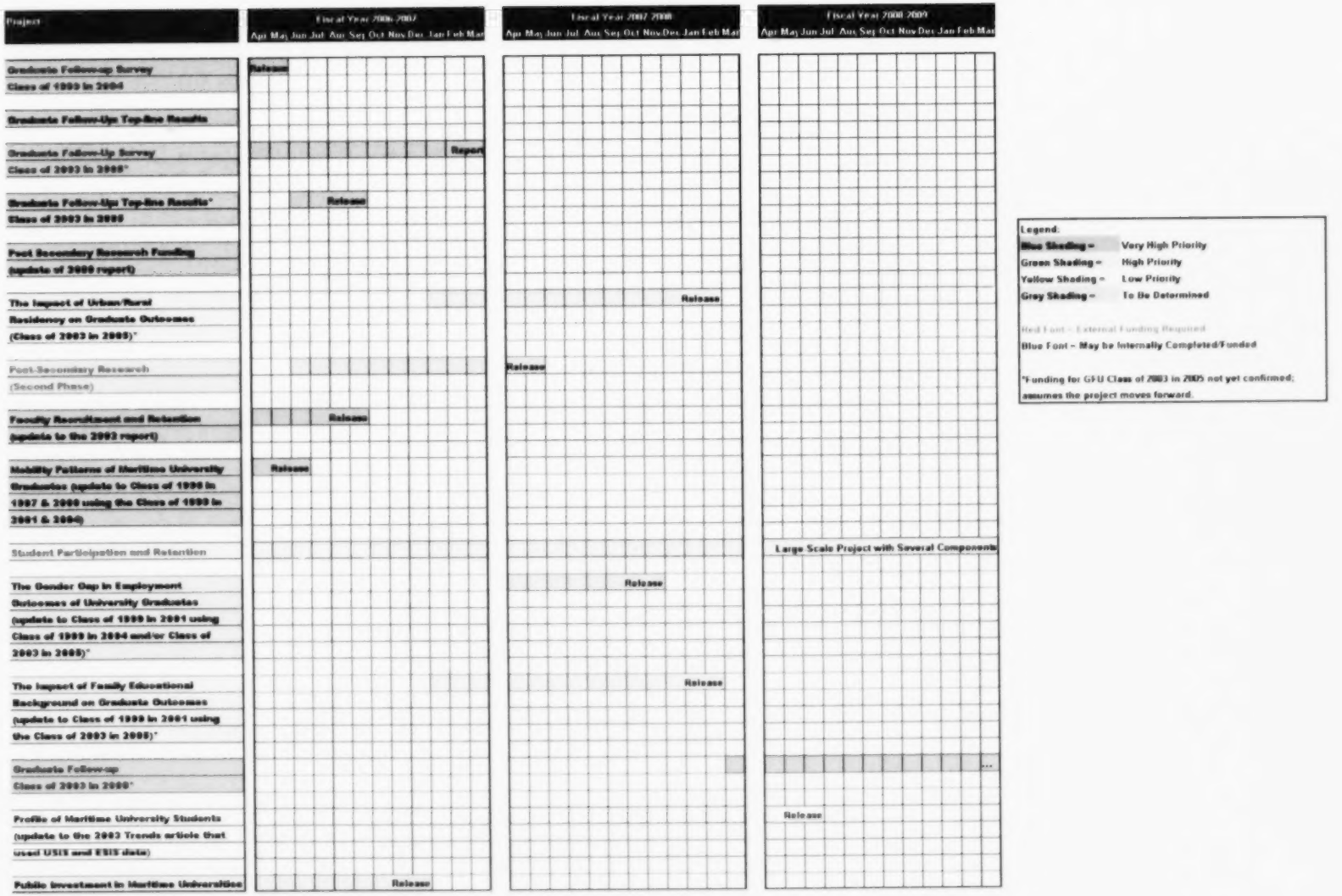
V Implementation Plan

The specifics of the implementation plan for the Commission's work is outlined in the following pages. The first section outlines the Commission's research program, while the second is a more traditional work plan, linked to each of the Commission's objectives.

The Commission's Research Program

The table, *Overview of the MPHEC's Research Program* on the next page, is meant to give the reader a snapshot of the Commission's research program with tentative timelines assigned to each project. It should be noted that the research program is more precise at the front-end of the chart with more room toward the end of the planning period to allow new and emerging priorities to be integrated in the program. The Commission recognizes the need to re-evaluate, on an annual basis, the tentative research program to determine the extent to which it should be maintained and/or modified based on Commission resources, issues of the day and stakeholder interest.

Research Program Overview
(as of June 1, 2005)


Project
Fiscal Year 2006-2007
Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar
Fiscal Year 2007-2008
Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar
Fiscal Year 2008-2009
Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar
Graduate Follow-up Survey
Class of 1999 in 2004
Release
Graduate Follow-Up Top-line Results
Graduate Follow-Up Survey
Class of 2003 in 2008*
Report
Graduate Follow-Up Top-line Results*
Class of 2003 in 2008
Release
Post Secondary Research Funding
(update of 2000 report)
The Impact of Urban/Rural
Residency on Graduate Outcomes
(Class of 2003 in 2008)*
Release
Post-Secondary Research
(Second Phase)
Faculty Recruitment and Retention
(update to the 2002 report)
Release
Mobility Patterns of Maritime University
Graduates (update to Class of 1999 in
1997 & 2000 using the Class of 1999 in
2001 & 2004)
Release
Student Participation and Retention
Large Scale Project with Several Components
The Gender Gap in Employment
Outcomes of University Graduates
(update to Class of 1999 in 2001 using
Class of 1999 in 2004 and/or Class of
2003 in 2008)*
Release
The Impact of Family Educational
Background on Graduate Outcomes
(update to Class of 1999 in 2001 using
the Class of 2003 in 2008)*
Release
Graduate Follow-up
Class of 2003 in 2008*
Profile of Maritime University Students
(update to the 2002 Trends article that
used USIS and ESIS data)
Release
Public Investment in Maritime Universities
Release
Legend:
Blue Shading = Very High Priority
Green Shading = High Priority
Yellow Shading = Low Priority
Grey Shading = To Be Determined
Red Font – External Funding Required
Blue Font – May be Internally Completed/Funded
*Funding for GPU Class of 2003 in 2005 not yet confirmed; assumes the project moves forward.

The Commission's Work Plan

The specifics of the implementation plan can be found in the work plan detailed in the table, *Planned Deliverables 2006-2007 to 2008-2009*, which will be updated annually. Each of the six objectives pursued by the Commission is linked to the legislated duties of the Commission and includes key deliverables planned during the period. The table is meant to provide the reader with an overview of the Commission's scope of activity. As with the Research Program, the Planned Deliverables are more precise at the beginning of the planning period, with more room toward the end of the planning period to allow for annual adjustments, which are normally done through the annual budget submission process.

PLANNED DELIVERABLES (2006-2007 to 2008-2009)

Objective	Duty Supported	Action/Deliverable	Timeline
(1) Provide assurances that programs developed by institutions within the MPHEC's scope meet agreed-upon quality criteria and Confirm that institutions within the MPHEC's scope have appropriate policies and practices to ensure the ongoing quality of their programs.	Quality Assurance/ Data and Information	Assess new, modified and terminated programs through the Commission's program approval process	Ongoing
		Assessment of the effectiveness and benefits of articulated programs	TBD
		Develop a Maritime Degree Level Qualification Framework.	Tentative 06-07
		Ongoing review and development of policies related to Quality Assurance	Ongoing
		Workshops on program proposal writing (for institutions)	TBD
		Follow-up on programs approved by the Commission with conditions	Annual
		Publish a Program Profile	TBD
		Assessment of institutional quality assurance policies and procedures	4 underway 05-06 to be completed 06-07; 3 underway 06-07. Remainder TBD
		Review the Commission's Quality Assurance Policy	TBD (every 2-3 year)

Objective	Duty Supported	Action/Deliverable	Timeline
(2) Collect, store and maintain quality, comprehensive and relevant information across all mandated functions and Devise data and information products providing stakeholders with value, across all mandated functions.	Data and Information	ESIS data collected	Twice/year
		ESIS data cleaned	Ongoing
		UCASS data updated (data from Statistics Canada)	Annually
		CAUBO database updated (data from Statistics Canada)	TBD
		Transfer to CIP coding	TBD
		ESIS output validation tool (update and support)	Ongoing
		Maritime pre-screener (update and support)	Ongoing
		Audit table (update and support)	Twice/year
		Other data related applications - upgrade and maintenance (FTP, FTE methodology, data import routine, etc.)	Ongoing
		Enrolment, FTE, WFTE, reports released	Twice/year
		Devise and develop Program Information Database System (PIDS)	TBD
		Devise and develop a database for Commission memoranda/decisions	TBD Deferred
		Monitoring security and confidentiality policies and procedures	Ongoing
		Faculty recruitment and retention (update of 2002 report)	Initiate 05-06
		Mobility Patterns of Maritime University Graduates	Initiate 05-06
		Graduate Follow-up Survey - Class of 2003 in 2005 (pending budget approval)	To be released 06-07
		"Top-line" results of Graduate Follow-up Survey Class of 2003 in 2008. (pending budget approval of Class of 2003 in 2005)	Initiate 08-09
		Graduate Follow-up Survey - Class of 2003 in 2008 (pending budget approval of Class of 2003 in 2005)	Initiate 08-09
		The impact of urban/rural residency on graduate outcomes (to include a further analysis of the effect of parental educational attainment on graduate outcomes) (pending budget approval of Graduate Follow-up Survey - Class of 2003 in 2005)	TBD
		Student participation and retention (new proposed large scale study; proposal to be developed)	Initiate 06-07
		Selected ESIS outputs published	Ongoing
		Institutional tuition survey	Annual
		Provide support to institutions (ESIS)	Ongoing
		Provide timely responses to *ad hoc* requests/inquiries for data output	Ongoing
		Presentations to government officials in each province of recent trends in Post-Secondary Education (suggested)	As required
		Other issues are explored as required	TBD
		Expand data/statistics available on-line	Ongoing

Objective	Duty Supported	Action/Deliverable	Timeline
(3) Increase awareness of, and dialogue on, Maritime Post-Secondary Education issues and opportunities, both in the Maritimes and nationally. (4) Promote and facilitate cooperation within the Maritimes and with other provinces and external partners (such as the Council of Ministers of Education and Statistics Canada), which includes facilitating and promoting cost-effectiveness of, and accessibility to, the broadest range possible of programs.	Cooperative Action/Data and Information/ Regional Programs	Organize symposium/workshop/forum/conference as issues required	TBD
		Meeting with Registrars	Ongoing
		Administration of NB/PEI ECN (support to Board and Technical Committee; prepare audited financial statements; prepare administrative budget and ensure adherence; pay invoices)	Ongoing
		Liaison with Statistics Canada (ESIS)	Ongoing
		Liaison and consultation with stakeholders (institutions, student and faculty associations, AAU)	Ongoing
		Distribution of program proposals (under quality assurance)	Ongoing
		Commission meetings held on institutional campuses	5-6 times/year
		Staff participation in various (regional and elsewhere) committees, associations, events	Ongoing
		Liaison with CMP/CAP	Ongoing
		Assist provincial government(s) in developing K-12 identifier compatible with ESIS	Underway
		Communication plan devised for individual data products	Ongoing
		Identification of regional programs (through the program approval process)	Ongoing
		Administration of the Regional Transfer Arrangement	Annual
		Administration and modification, as required, of inter-provincial agreements (NB-Québec; tripartite agreement; NB-NFLD; NFLD-NS; etc.)	Ongoing
		Administration of Official Languages in Education (NB)	Ongoing
		Monitoring of CNFS (Centre national de formation en santé/National Health Training Centre) for francophones	Ongoing
		Regional coordination of university distance education broadcasts on ASN	Quarterly
		Linkage with Atlantic Advisory Committee on Health Human Resources	Ongoing
		Assessment of the effectiveness and benefits of articulated programs	TBD
(5) Provide advice and services to the Provinces, as requested.	Varies	Provide FTE/WFTE counts to generate 3 years average of WFTE for funding purposes (NB only)	Annually
		Request and review submissions of three-year capital projections, and develop recommendations; subsequently administer (NB)	Annually
		Participate in various provincial committees/task forces	Ongoing
		Manage various reserves	Ongoing
		Participate in NB Public Accounts/Estimates	Annually
		Monitor accumulated deficits (institutions) (NB only)	TBD

Objective	Duty Supported	Action/Deliverable	Timeline
		Assist NB in preparing and analyzing various budget scenarios for annual post-secondary funding allocation	Annually
		Administration and distribution of approved funding (NB and PEI)	Ongoing
		Administration and distribution of special projects funding (NB)	Ongoing
		Develop and update policy for the administration fo NB resources (NB only)	TBD
		Respond to *ad hoc* requests for financial information and analysis	Ongoing
		Provide audited financial statements	Annually
		Assess program proposals under the New Brunswick Degree Granting Act	As required
		Provide NB and NS with list of approved programs	Ongoing
		Design and develop the algorithm to calculate and extract the FLE and FTE for the NS Funding Formula	TBD
		Provide NS with the list of courses and program reported through ESIS (bin assignments)	TBD
(6) Ensure the effective and efficient management of Commission resources (corporate objective).	Corporate	Evaluation, modifications as required, and documentation of the Commission's organizational structure/operational framework.	Ongoing
		Integrate data management team within base funding	06-07
		Provide audited financial statements	Annually
		Administer Commission's base budget	Ongoing
		Budget submissions	Annually
		Ensure accuracy of financial information/documentation	Ongoing
		Documentation of MPHEC Data Management System	Ongoing
		Support to Commission in its activities as a board	Ongoing
		Support to Committee proceedings	Ongoing
		Meeting with Ministers and Deputy Ministers	Ongoing
		Maintain and upgrade IT infrastructure (LAN, FTP server, DNS server, Web server, Email server, PCs, database server, file server applications, etc)	Ongoing
		Submit Annual Report	Annually
		Regular update of web site	Ongoing
		Devise and implement a communication plan	TBD
		Management of human resources	Ongoing
		Documentation of security policies and procedures	Ongoing

Resources Required

The work plan outlined in the preceding pages reveals an ambitious plan to be realized with limited and uncertain resources, as the issue of the Commission's resources was not fully addressed following the renewal of its mandate.

The Commission historically has had a staffing ceiling of 11 FTE, which remains in effect. The authorized staffing complement has historically included one senior executive (then Chair, now CEO) and two senior management positions (Director of Academic Planning and Research and Director of Finance), five professional positions (research officers and finance officers) and three administrative positions. Since 1996-1997, due to financial considerations, the Commission has operated, in addition to the CEO, with only one senior management position (between 1996 and 2001, a Director of Academic Planning and Research; since 2001, a Director of Finance), six professional positions and two administrative positions for a total of 10 FTE funded from the administration budget.

The Commission's renewed mandate has presented the challenge of integrating new functions within an already-established structure and reflected a shift in focus, rather than the complete suppression of functions. The maintenance of the Commission's historical functions in one way or another (for example its roles in university funding in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island and the administration of the Regional Transfer Arrangement), even through a re-ordering of its priorities, has required that its resident expertise be maintained close to those of past levels.

The deliverables outlined in the work plan reveal an ambitious plan to be realized with limited resources. Over the last several years, the Commission has undertaken major initiatives to allow the fulfilment of its new mandated functions. For example, the initiatives developed and implemented in the area of Quality Assurance were entirely absorbed within the established staffing complement and budget level. This was achieved through the re-design of processes and a re-ordering of priorities.

In the area of Data and Information, the new initiatives could not be integrated to the base for two major reasons. First, the Commission's stakeholders agreed, over the last five years, on the data elements to be collected in addition to identifying a minimum threshold in terms of data quality, both of which require significant resources. Second, the technological infrastructure supporting the data management system required to pursue the above also requires, on an on-going basis, human and financial resources. As noted earlier, since 1996-1997 these functions have been supported through special project funding. The result is that most of the Data and Information resources are funded through special project funding, subject to annual approvals, and performed by contractual staff, also subject to annual renewals.

The danger is clear: the Data and Information function is integral to the success of the Commission as it supports all mandated functions, and while the area is fully integrated in the

business process, it is not integrated into the resource base, and is therefore vulnerable, making the entire organization as vulnerable.

In the area of post-secondary funding, it has been agreed that the Commission would continue to provide services to both New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. The New Brunswick Department of Education now provides additional funding ($40,000 annually) to the Commission to ensure the on-going provision of services to the province in this area; this additional funding allowed the Commission to re-assign one of its permanent and funded FTE to data management. In addition, one of the 11 FTE, not staffed as it was not funded over the last several years, has also been re-assigned to data management.

The data management team itself underwent a significant re-alignment. Prior to its new mandate in 1997, the Commission dedicated approximately between 0.5 FTE to one FTE specifically to data management. As the Commission's new mandate put significantly more emphasis on data management, starting in 1997 through special project funding (the Information Framework Project), the data management team expanded significantly from 0.5 to one FTE, prior to 1997, to six FTE in 1999-2000 (only one of which was funded through the Commission's base budget) and included a senior management position dedicated to information technology. Starting in 2000, a significant re-alignment of resources occurred. Several decisions related to staffing of the data team were made to reduce its size (for example, the Director position was eliminated, some functions were automated, tools were developed to streamline the data collection process, timelines were modified and some activities were deferred). Through this process, the Commission was able to reduce the size of its data team to a total of three FTE, one of which is absorbed within the Commission's budget (as a 10th FTE), one which could be folded within the authorized staffing complement if it were funded within the Commission's budget (referred to as the 11th FTE), and one additional FTE. However, currently of these three FTE, only one is funded within the Commission's base budget, while the other two are funded through special project funding.

The Commission believes it is crucial to stress the anomaly that one of the Commission's core functions, which is fully integrated within the Commission's business processes and which underpins most of the other core functions, continues to be funded on an *ad hoc* basis, as it has been since 1996-1997, and is subject to annual renewal. If in any year, special project funding were not provided for these two FTE, the decision that would be required is not as simple as elimination of the FTE in question. These FTE are integrated within a larger team, which would not function in their absence. Beyond putting at risk the Provinces' significant investment since 1996-1997[2] in the expansion of the Commission's data management capability, the absence of funding for these two FTE would require a serious re-consideration of the work plan across the board.

The key issue with regard to the Commission's resources pertains to the normalization of resources allocated to the organization for nearly a decade through annual special project funding. Given that the 1997 mandate has now been legislated and can be expected to be stable for the foreseeable

[2]Approximately $1.5 million; this amount does not include the Commission's own contribution to data management.

future, this is an opportune time to integrate the data management team into the base budget. Data management reflects a core function of the organization, yet it is funded through annual requests for special project funding. The proposed budget (which follows) for the years of the planning period includes a request to transfer to the Commission's base budget the funding provided since 1996-1997 through special project funding - Information Framework - to fund the Commission's data management capability. This request, for an amount of $132,000, actually reflects the status quo in terms of funding allocated to the Commission's human resources and reflects what is required for the Commission to deliver on the enclosed work plan.

The only special projects included in the Research Program which require additional funding relate to the Graduate Follow-up Survey Program. During the planning period, two surveys are planned and require funding - the Class of 2003 in 2005 and the Class of 2003 in 2008. The following chart illustrates the Commission's Survey program.

MPHEC Graduate Survey program: Completed and proposed surveys (cohort year, survey year)

COHORT YEAR	SURVEY YEAR																						
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
1995		1																					
1996			1			4																	
1997																							
1998																							
1999							2			5													
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2011																			2			5	
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2014																							
2015																							2

*Numbers in cells show number of years after graduation